1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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C. *Omens*

We have seen how the addling of the eggs of the *kasyeq-gaita's* hens may lead to the abandonment of a village site[1]; how the siting of a new Bison-horn village is affected by the finding of roots or stones when the *perma* digs a hole for the first *saja* post, and how even when these omens have allowed the hole to be dug, they have further to be confirmed by the villagers waiting till the next day to see whether two heaps of rice have been disturbed[2]; and how before the ceremonial *weta* hunts of the Bison-horn Marias begin, the *perma* consults the omens with two split pieces of a tooth-stick.[3] The Bison-horn Maria often calls in the *waddai* to examine the omens and fix auspicious days for sowing or other occasions. Omens are particularly important in connexion with betrothals and weddings, but among Bison-horn Marias only; the Hill Marias, except those living in contact with the Bison-horn Marias, seem not to worry over them, and in fact to be ignorant of the whole practice. But the Bison-horn Maria likes everything done on an auspicious day, and then only if no adverse omen is met. Russell and Hiralal (III, p. 78) write:—

> 'In Bastar an omen is taken before the wedding. The village elders meet on an auspicious day as Monday, Thursday or Friday, and after midnight they cook and eat food, and go out into the forest. They look for a small black bird called Usi, from which omens are commonly taken. When anybody sees this bird, if it cries "*Sun, Sun*" on the right hand, it is thought that the marriage will be lucky. If, however, it cries "*Chi, Chi*", or "*Fis, Fis*", the proposed match is held to be of evil omen, and is cancelled. The Koya Gonds of Bastar distil mahua liquor before arranging for a match. If the liquor is good, they think the marriage will be lucky, and take the liquor with them to cement the betrothal; but if it is bad they think the marriage will be unlucky, and the proposal is dropped.'

The *usi* bird is a common source of omens; the Marias of the Kutru zamindari below the Abujhmar hills, who are really Hill Marias influenced greatly by contact with Bison-horn Marias and Teluguized Dorlas, when they select a new *modul wadde* as clan-priest and social arbiter, consult the omens before confirming their selection; they go to the forest, and if they hear an *usi* twittering on their left as they go and on their right as they return, consider that the omens favour their selection, but make a fresh selection if the bird twitters on the other sides. Among Bison-horn Marias the *usi* is not the usual source of marriage omens; if the party on its way to ask for a girl's hand in marriage meets a tiger, panther, sambhur, chital, jackal or snake crossing their path from left to right, it is a good omen; if it crosses the path from right to left, the omen is bad, but merely shows that the expedition has started on a bad day and must

[1] See p. 103. [2] See pp. 122-3. [3] See p. 211.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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be postponed for a week or two, not that the proposed match should be dropped.

D. Beliefs about Natural Phenomena

To the Hill Maria the universe is *Bhum*, the sky being *Pogho-bhum*, and the earth *Adi-bhum*; they have no name for any underworld or home of the Departed. They sometimes say that they have heard of a god named Ispural living in *Pogho-bhum*, but that they do not worship him. To Hill and Bison-horn Maria the sun (*porad*) is a Koitor, the moon (*lenj*) his woman, and the stars (*hukom* or *minkos*, Hill Maria; *uk'ka*, Bison-horn Maria) are their children; falling stars (*Sohra*, Hill Maria) are their excrement; the Bison-horn Marias consider that falling stars are a portent of death. Both Hill and Bison-horn Marias call the Milky Way the Road (*daghar*, Hill Maria; *marg*, Bison-horn), but they do not know who or what uses the road and have no legend about it, though the Bhattras and Murias of Jagdalpur say that it is the road over which Bhimul drives his bullock-cart, the thunder being the rumbling of the wheels. The only constellations for which I could get Hill Maria names were *Nagar* or Plough for Orion and *Khatoli* or Cot for the Great Bear; enquiries on this point among the Bison-horn Marias drew blank. Neither had any theory about the markings on the moon's face; the Hill Marias have observed that they sometimes look like a human face. The Hill Marias call the rainbow the Earth-serpent (*Bhum-taras*, or *Bhum-taras-korta*), and say that it crawls out of a great ant-hill and throws its light across the sky as a sign of no more rain: the Bison-horn Marias call it *Bhimul-ril*, the bow of Bhimul the rain-god. The Hill Marias associate clouds (*mayyal*) with rain (*pegh*), but do not know where the rain comes from. Thunder (*gadar*) and lightning (*orr*) just happen, and do not alarm them, nor do they appear to have any special precautions to take in burying a man killed by lightning, unlike the Bison-horn Maria. But hail (*adur*) terrifies them, and all rush into their houses. They have no explanation of eclipses, which they call *garhar*, an obvious corruption of the Hindi *grahan*; but the idiomatic way of saying 'there is an eclipse' is '*garhar lopinta*', literally 'the eclipse is swallowing'; and both they and Bison-horn Marias call a man with a hare-lip '*garhar-kandya*', an expression which they themselves cannot explain and is borrowed direct from their Hindu neighbours, who always attribute a hare-lip to an eclipse during the mother's pregnancy.

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836 II. His sister married Gecha Harma of Udala Tondawada, and at the wedding he met Harma's sister Gecha Kowe, and danced with her. They liked each other, and met at other weddings and at koqsar dances, and had sexual intercourse two or three times, which Moda said was necessary in order to ascertain that they were both physically capable. Everyone saw that they were in love, and their wedding followed as soon as the necessary betrothal ceremonies could be completed. But if pre-marital intercourse results in pregnancy, there can be no formal marriage, which the Hill Marias call *marmi* and the Bison-horn *pendul*; the girl states the name of the man responsible, and goes to live in his house without any ceremony, the union being described as *ottur* ('taken away'). A child born to a girl without even *ottur* would be considered as belonging to the clan of the man whom the mother names as the father; and this putative father would be expected to take the mother and child to his house, the union being known to the Hill Marias as *ahene-hattu* ('thus-went'). No stigma attaches to such unions, and the children have exactly the same position and rights as the children of a formal marriage.

588 848

●584 Hill Maria parents do not try to interfere in their children's choice of wives and husbands. When a youth and his girl know their minds, each tells his or her parents. Then the youth's parents, with the elders of the village, go, without the youth, with about a rupee's worth of *mahua* spirit (or five bottles) to the girl's parents, taking care to arrive at their house at about four or five o'clock in the afternoon. The father of the youth opens the door of the girl's house, places the liquor bottles inside the threshold and rejoins his party, all of whom sit silent outside the door. The girl's parents then call in some of the elders of their village, and in their presence tell the girl that this liquor has been brought on her account, and ask her if she is willing to go and live with the youth in the village from which the liquor has come. If the girl agrees, the liquor is at once drunk by the parties from the two villages, and the girl's parents entertain the visiting party to supper; if she refuses, the youth's parents take the liquor back to their village. This ceremony is called *talq-da'ina* ('going to ask'). It may take place on any day of the year, Hill Marias recking nothing of auspicious days or omens.

Hill Maria regular betrothal and marriage

[787]

There is a second *talq-da'ina*, generally after an interval of about a year; it sometimes takes place sooner, but it is considered bad form to be too importunate. The youth does not go with his parents even this time; he does not, indeed, meet his betrothed between the first *talq-da'ina* and marriage, as, once a girl's hand

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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has been formally demanded, shame prevents her looking at her betrothed. The parents this time do not take the village elders with them, but bring a rupee's worth of *mahua*, as before. The purpose of the visit is to ask the girl's parents if they are now ready to give the girl in marriage, or want to wait another six months or year; if they are poor, they may not have had time to collect enough to meet their share of the cost of the wedding, and this is the only possible justification for further postponement of the wedding. Normally the girl's parents say they are ready, and ask the youth's parents to come for the girl in ten days' time. This visit occurs generally at the end of Phagur or early in Chaita month, because, although marriages may take place at any time of year, they almost always take place in Chaita, when there is no field work and there is plenty of grain in hand from the freshly garnered harvest. Before this visit the amount of the bride-price or *paring*, settled at the previous *talq-da'ina*, should be ready, and the girl's parents signify their readiness to give the girl by asking the youth's parents to bring the bride-price in ten days' time. The amount of the bride-price varies with the means of the youth's family. It consists of a rupee's worth of new cloth for the bride's mother, a gelded pig, one *paili* (four pounds) of salt, one *paili* of ground *ambari* (roselle) flowers, one or two pounds of red chillies, two or three pieces of turmeric, and, according to the means of the bridegroom's family, from one to four *duti* baskets each containing ten *paili* (forty pounds) of husked *kutki*, from eight annas' to three rupees' worth of *mahua* spirit, and from Rs. 5 to Rs. 40 in cash. It is the cash portion of the bride-price that is avoided or reduced by cross-cousin marriage or such arrangements as the marriage of a brother and sister of one family to the sister and brother of another; other items are unaffected; the bride's mother must always get her cloth, and the pig and grain are eaten at the wedding.

On the day appointed for bringing the bride-price the bridegroom stays at home, but his father and mother, taking the bride-price, proceed to the bride's village, accompanied by all their fellow-villagers, and preceded by three or four drummers. The villagers who go with them, men, women, boys and girls, do not expect to be fed entirely at the expense of the bridegroom's parents, and therefore take their own food and drink for the first meal on arrival; it is felt that to be entertained at the expense of the parents would not be helping them, but adding to the financial burden of the wedding.

On arrival, the bridegroom's parents make the bride-price over to the bride's parents, and all the visiting party then cook their food and eat it apart from the bride's parents and co-villagers. After

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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to let his daughter go, or to lose the assistance of his future son-in-law; but in that case the marriage is at once celebrated, the *lamana'i* leaving his father-in-law's house where he has stayed for the period of his service for a house built for him in the father-in-law's village, and his parents and their party, after the wedding dance and breakfast, take the girl and leave her there with him instead of in their own village; but thereafter no *lamana'i* ever stays more than two years in his father-in-law's village. Provided that the girl has not become pregnant, there is always a regular *marmi* wedding at the end of the agreed term, the bride's parents meeting the expenses; if she has become pregnant, after the penal feast of pork already mentioned she becomes the *lamana'i's* wife merely by passing into his keeping by *ottur*.

This account of marriage by service is based entirely on investigations among the Hill Marias; but it is equally common among the Bison-horn Marias, and their practice is much the same except that, of course, the regular marriage at the end of the term of service is the ordinary Bison-horn *pendul* wedding, while, owing to the fact that in all villages there are many houses and fields belonging to clans other than the original clan that founded the village, the *lamana'i* often settles permanently in his father-in-law's village, and breaks up new land for himself with the consent of the *peda* or headman.

Bison-horn Maria betrothal ('talpana') and marriage ('pendul')

Among Bison-horn Marias a father wishing to ask another man for his daughter's hand for his son goes to him with a few relatives and takes a *paili* of rice, and a large earthen pot (*handi*) and a small earthen pot (*dudi*) of *mahua* spirit. As already stated in the section on omens, the party will turn back if it meets a bad omen on the way, and postpone the journey for a fortnight. On their arrival at the girl's house her father calls his relatives and the village elders; when all have assembled, the father of the prospective bridegroom formally asks the girl's father for the girl as his son's wife. Sometimes the visiting father comes rather to assert his right to the girl in *gudapal* marriage, and before either his son or the girl has attained puberty, than in the expectation of arranging the wedding in the near future, especially if he has heard rumours of the girl being given to someone else; in such cases the girl's father almost always refuses to give his girl at least till both the boy and the girl are mature, and the boy's father formally declares that he will never renounce his *gudapal* rights. It has already been said that the Bison-horn Marias assert these rights more strongly than the Hill Marias, among whom the *gudapal* tie is rather a convenient and economical arrangement than a binding

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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584 contract; they therefore attach less importance to the consent of the girl, and even if a father or his son agree to the *gudapal* girl marrying some other husband, the latter has to compensate the *gudapal* cousin. If a girl's father raises objections to the proposed match, whether a *gudapal* match or not, bitter quarrels often follow; but generally the boy and girl have learnt their own minds before this first formal demand for the girl (*talpana* in the Bison-horn dialect), or there has been previous informal discussion between the two families. Normally, therefore, the youth and girl both being mature, the girl's father gladly agrees to give his girl, and then the youth's father gives him the *paili* of rice and the large and the small pots of *mahua* liquor. The girl's father takes the small pot into the *narma-lon* room of his house, and pours a small quantity on the ground in front of the Pot of the Departed as a libation, the rest being drunk by him and the members of his family. The liquor in the large pot is divided among the relatives and friends of both families who have come to witness the *talpana*, and all disperse except the youth's father and his companions; the rice which he has brought is cooked and served to them and the girl's family. Her father then invites the youth's father to come again for the formal declaration of the betrothal to all his relatives and friends from near and far. The visitors then return to their village.

Some time later the father of the youth in consultation with his friends, and often with the aid of a medium, fixes a day for this second visit, and sends word to the girl's father in good time for him to invite all his relatives and friends. This time he and his party take with them a small pig, two *paili* of rice, a very large pot of *landa* and a large and a small pot of *mahua* spirit. On arrival at the girl's house they are greeted by her father and the assembled guests, and the former announces the betrothal to the company and asks for their formal approval. This given, the girl's father as before pours a libation to the Departed from the small pot of *mahua*, and he and his household drink the rest of its contents. The large pots of *landa* and *mahua* spirit are consumed by all the assembled guests, *barbatti* beans being fried by the girl's mother and served along with the *landa*; and the rice and pork are cooked and served to all present. All then go.

Yet a third preliminary visit to the girl's father follows, the date being arranged as before by the youth's father, and word being sent to the girl's father. This time the former and his party take and deliver to the latter two large pots of *landa*, two large and one small pots of *mahua* spirit, five *paili* of rice or *kutki*, and a large pig. The youth's father tells the girl's father that he intends to

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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celebrate his son's marriage on a certain date, and asks him to deliver the girl to him on the appointed day; in reply he agrees to do so, but calls on the youth's father to settle the bride-price then and there, and to deliver it to him when he comes for the girl. Bison-horn Marias do not use the word *paring* for the bride-price, but either the Chhattisgarhi Hindi word *barna*, the Halbi word *jora*, or, more commonly, the ordinary Hindi term for expenses, *karcha*. They then discuss terms. If it is a *gudapal* union, the girl's father expects only to get as much *landa*, *mahua* spirit, grain and cloth as his family had to pay in the previous generation when he married her mother. A Bison-horn marriage is extremely expensive to the bridegroom's parents because they are expected to keep open house, and guests pour in uninvited from all villages to which the throb of the marriage drums reverberates; and therefore the actual bride-price is kept as low as possible. In fact, in many *parganas* they assert that no cash passes from the bridegroom's parents to the bride's. The practice varies; a single rupee passed in the weddings that I saw, though in certain disputes that came to my notice after a wife had eloped with another man the first husband claimed from the new husband the refund of cash alleged to have formed part of the bride-price. In general, however, cash is not the important element in the Bison-horn that it is in the Hill Maria bride-price. Usually the bride-price consists of from five to ten very large pots of *landa*, one *paili* of husked rice or *kutki* for every pot of *landa*, two large and one small pots of *mahua* spirit, a large gelded pig ready slaughtered, a cock, and about four yards of Mahra cloth for the bride's mother, the cloth being sometimes called in Hindi *ma'i-lugra*. Another consideration is the cost of the dinner that the girl's father has to give to his relatives before the girl is taken away, known as *sutlam-jawa*, and of her going-away presents; in the discussion about the bringing of the bride-price on the wedding-day suggested by the bridegroom's father, the girl's father sometimes alleges that he is too poor to collect the necessary food and presents by the suggested date and that he must therefore have another year before handing over his daughter, unless the bridegroom's father will help him with a loan in cash or in kind. The loan is readily made if the latter is well-to-do. These matters being settled, the bride's father formally promises to hand the girl over on the appointed day, and the promise is ratified by the usual libation from the small pot of *mahua* to the Departed of the girl's family, and the consumption of the *landa* and the *mahua* spirit by all present, the bridegroom's father and his party returning to their village after having been entertained to dinner by the bride's father.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

CHAPTER FIVE

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: YOUTH

I. BETROTHAL

584 THE next critical moment in the life of a Muria is the betrothal. This may be done at any age, before puberty or after it, but it is generally arranged later rather than sooner. It is followed, after a number of years, by the marriage, which is still nearly everywhere adult.

I propose to give in this chapter an account of the ceremonies of betrothal and marriage so that our picture of the course of Muria life may be complete, but I will reserve a discussion of the broader aspects of marriage to PART TWO of the book so that they can be considered, where they ought to be considered, in relation to the ghotul.

The betrothal ceremony is called in Gondi *pungār mihchna*, the 'plucking of the flower', *pungār kurhi*, 'looking at the flower' and *talk dāyna*, 'going to beg'. These expressions indicate the chief features of the ceremony: the boy's parents make two or even three visits to the house of the future bride, the 'flower' whom the boy will pick and put in his turban.

On the first occasion, before setting out, the boy's father offers liquor in siari leaf-cups to the Departed, one for the boy, one for the girl and one for the Departed themselves. They wait for a time, and if they find one of the leaves has fallen or curled up, they take it that the omens are unfavourable, and either abandon the project or postpone it. In fact, this is the time when the greatest attention is paid to omens.

584 Muria omens are specially important before an engagement, on the way to the forest for a hunt and before setting out on a journey. These 781 'symbols of the future seen in the present'[1] do not influence events, but declare what is about to happen. If the members of a betrothal party see a bad omen on the way they return home because they know it will be a sheer waste of time to proceed; their visit simply cannot be successful.

781 It is through animals especially that the Departed and clan-ancestors warn or encourage the living about the future. 'The Departed', they said at Palli, 'speak through animals telling us to go or not to go.' On a ceremonial hunt, if one of the party fails in some ritual duty to the dead, an offended ancestor may take the form of an animal and attack him as a warning.

Muria omens can be divided quite simply into good and bad.

GOOD OMENS

An usir bird cries *uing-uing* on the left.

The cry of the kiddari bird on the left, saying 'Go, go, your business will succeed'.

A jackal going from left to right. 'The left side is regarded as a centre of greater vitality than the right. Hence the jackal going from left to right means that the animal is going away from the life centre, and thus that a death symbol is being removed.'[2]

A monkey cries *hoop-hoop*. It might be supposed that it was the reference to Hanuman and the sacred monkeys that made this lucky

[1] W. G. Archer, *The Blue Grove* (London, 1940), p. 159. [2] ibid., p. 161.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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but for the fact that the omen can also be bad. If the members of a betrothal party hear a monkey cough, they return home. 787

A tiger or leopard. A symbol of power.

A mango tree. This is lucky because mango leaves are used to decorate the marriage-booth.

A bear. Another symbol of power. The bear is generally looked on as very potent, and its male member is used as an aphrodisiac. [832]

A blue sambhar.

A woman carrying a full pot—though in some villages it is thought unlucky to see any kind of pot.

When a sparrow says *pitih pitih* it means the carriers of officials on tour are coming; if it says *pichu pichu*, it means they are going somewhere else and all is well.

BAD OMENS

An usir bird crying *kichir-kichir* on the right.

The cry of the kiddari bird on the right, saying '*Kiddarr*, don't go, don't go'.

A crow crying *haw haw*, eat, eat! Its tail points towards something dead for the vultures to eat.

A snake across the path. A very natural warning of danger.

A woman carrying an empty pot or going to the river with a bundle of dirty clothes.

Anyone throwing away ashes or rubbish.

A plantain tree, for its leaves are placed on a bier and in a grave.

A peacock.

A mongoose.

A rat.

A lizard. If one crosses your path, you should catch it and burn it to ashes.

In some villages, a cat.

A hare.

Thursday and Saturday are unlucky days, on which important work should not be started.

If the omens are favourable, the father of the bridegroom, with two or three relatives carrying several bottles of the best liquor, set out for the bride's house. When they reach their destination they sit down in the court, and presently the girl's father says, 'Have you come on any business?' They answer, 'We hear that a flower has blossomed in your house; we have come to pluck it'. 'Why do you want to pluck it?' asks the girl's father. 'So that we may stick it in our hair.' 'Have you seen the omens on the way?' asks the girl's father. 'Yes, and they were good to us.'[1] 584

If the parents are willing they now usually ask the girl her opinion. If she refuses, they tell the visitors that the flower is not for plucking, but if she

[1] W. G. Archer has made a careful study of these symbolic dialogues during marriage negotiations (op. cit., pp. 147ff. and *Man in India*, Vol. XXIII (1943), pp. 147ff.). The flower symbolism does not seem to be used by the Uraons, but Russell and Hiralal notice it for the Konds (op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 467f) and give some charming sentences used by the Turi. 'I hear that a sweet-scented flower has blossomed in your house and I have come to gather it.' To which the bride's father may reply, 'You may take my flower, if you will not throw it away when its sweet scent is gone'. (ibid., Vol. IV, p. 590.) The same symbolism is known to the Kharia and I have recorded its use among the Bison-horn Maria, the Kurak and the Dhurwa in Bastar.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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584 agrees, they accept the liquor brought and drink it together. If the parents are unwilling, but the girl desires the match, it is said that they usually have to give in to her.

Here too they offer liquor on leaves to the Departed inside the house and watch the leaves to see whether the omens are favourable or not.

At the next visit, the boy's parents bring four baskets of rice and more liquor. The boy's mother washes the girl's feet with liquor and offers a ring. In some villages they drop liquor in the rice-husking cavity; in others they make an offering of cowries or their equivalent to the Pot of the Departed. As they do so, the boy's father says, 'O Departed, accept this offering. We take this girl into our clan and give you cowries in her stead'. At Esalnar the people said that in the old days the Duga sept used to give five cowries, and now give fifteen pice, and the Sori sept used to give three cowries and now nine pice.[1] These are put into the Pot of the Departed. From this day the girl is regarded as belonging to the clan of her betrothed, and must obey its rules and taboos. In some places it is considered proper that a girl should go, even before marriage, for New Eating ceremonies to her future husband's house.

At Chimri I was told that as the boy's parents go home, the motiari stop them and demand 'ring-cowrie', a small present of rings or cowries to compensate the ghotul for the loss that it will suffer when the girl is married. In other places, this is done during the marriage ceremony.

[301]

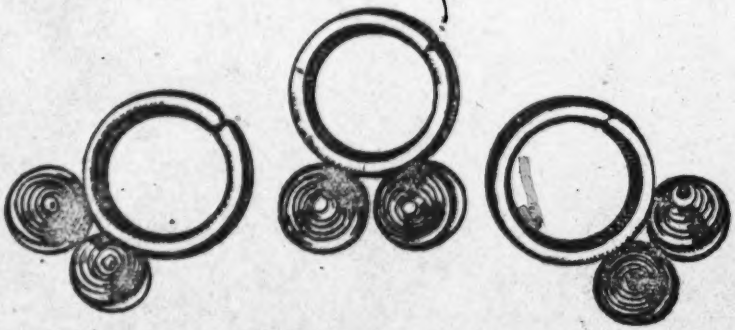

FIG. 17. Brass rings with small bells attached
Actual size

At this second visit, the bride-price is fixed. If the engagement is made many years before marriage the boy's parents generally pay an annual visit to the girl's house, taking her presents of liquor and ornaments.

[801] The bride-price should be in terms of odd numbers, three, five, seven or eleven. Even numbers are *jori ki jori* and so unlucky: you must have something over a pair. The number nine is also unlucky: a man may die of it.

There are many games about this betrothal ceremony and it is often mentioned in the songs; during their slow tedious dance round the marriage-booth the chelik sing a mixed Gondi and Halbi song about it.

[1] The Muria clans do not now appear to worship different numbers of gods, but the above practice suggests that perhaps they once did. Ward says that the Gond marriage contract was generally to the effect 'that the father of the bridegroom elect should give the father of the bride as many rupees as he worships Deos (the latter never exceed nine in number, but vary from that number to five)'.—H. C. E. Ward, *Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Mundlah District* (Bombay, 1870), p. 136.

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Nihun lewāl wātor nuni.	We have come to take you, girl.
Halay dehi jhulay de!	Let us shake her, let us swing her!
Jora jāngh la nichat lamay de.	Extend both your legs.
Chābde re ban ke bendra.	The forest monkey bites.
Kokom de re ghar ke bilai	The household cat scratches.
Mahāra dhare jora bichchu.	In the Mahara's house, there is a pair of scorpions.
Re re loyo rela re re la!	*Re re loyo re re la!*

II. The Evidence of the Songs

The importance of the betrothal ceremony is shown by the place it holds in the long narrative songs sung in the ghotul or at a funeral. These songs are valuable as revealing in the most authentic manner what the Muria themselves regard as important; they are in fact documentaries in verse.

I quote here two of these songs, both of which give an interesting account of the course of Muria life. The first is a song used when a menhir is erected. It was sung by Dorga Muria of Dugabangal, a village at the foot of the Abujhmar Hills. In the second song, a Ghotul Pata from Nayanar, is another vivid description of the betrothal. Both in these songs and similar narrative poems given elsewhere in this book, the importance of the ceremony is clearly emphasized.

The Fate of Nirabosi Usendi

In this island of the world lived Kamragatti of the Dhurwa clan.
He had a daughter.
There was a boy, too, son of Nirabosi of the Usendi clan.
Nirabosi Usendi went to Kamragatti Dhurwa to betroth his son.
He himself went ahead and the brother-clansmen behind.
The Dhurwa asked them, 'Why have you come?'
'You have a daughter, we have come for her.'
'I have a daughter, I have not given her to anyone.'
Thus spoke Kamragatti to Nirabosi of the Usendi clan.
Seeing the bottle of liquor, Kamragatti desired it.
'You are related to me of old, I will give you my daughter.'

The daughter was inside and heard their talk.
She said, 'Many men came for my betrothal, but he did not give me to them.
Today they came and he has given me.'
Thinking thus she was very pleased.
The men drank the liquor and so made an end.
Old man Kamragatti was thinking; he thought, 'I too will give them liquor'.
Amasetiya Kalar and Hiramoti Kalarin had a still.
He went there to fetch liquor.
His daughter came out of the house.
The Usendi asked her, 'Where are you going?'
'I am not going anywhere, I am only coming out of the house.'
'O daughter-in-law, you are so big—why are you not going to someone?
O daughter-in-law, we have come today for your betrothal and you are going out.'
'Men came before for my betrothal, but my father refused to give me.
That is why I am living here and do not go to anyone.'

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

584 'Hear my word, O daughter-in-law, I have a son, come for him.
Come to the Saturday bazaar, I will send my son there.'
539 The Usendi said thus and the daughter-in-law was ready to go to the bazaar.

The old man Kamragatti brought liquor.
'I have already taken your liquor, now take mine',
So saying they sat and drank together.
They finished the liquor and were ready for food.
They made chicken curry and prepared fine rice.
They finished the food and got up to go.
Usendi said, 'O samdhi, now we must go'.
'It is no use coming once, you must come again;
'My daughter is young; we will drink a lot of liquor.'
Doing Johar to his samdhi Usendi said, 'I will come again'.

Usendi went to his house and told his son, the Garhbangal boy,
'We went for your betrothal and everything is well arranged,
O son, go to the Saturday bazaar and there the girl will come to meet you.'
When his father said this, the boy was silent from shyness.
This Garhbangal boy prepared to go to the bazaar.

Kamragatti's daughter was called Nerum Taro.
As she went round the bazaar, she met the boy.
They were of one face, like brother and sister.
She asked him, 'Where are you living?'
And he replied, 'Where are you living?
I am living in such and such a village, and I am a Usendi boy'.
Hearing this, she told him,
'We have already talked with your father and it is of you we talked'.
'Yes, I am that boy; come girl, come home with me.'
When the Garhbangal boy said this, the girl was ready to go.
The boy went ahead and the girl followed him.
As they went they passed a jungle on the way.
They went into the thicket beneath the shade of a mango tree.
As they rested, the boy said, 'Don't go back to your father's house'.
'I won't go, brother, how can I leave you?'
The Garhbangal boy was very pleased.
He held her arm as though it were a sweet root;
Her bosom was a banyan leaf on which lay two fruits;
He held the breasts and she remained quiet.
Her thighs were stalks of a plantain tree.
He spread them out and did as he desired.

They got up from there and went to the house;
The path was a jackal's bush, the road was a rat's tail.
Talking to one another, they reached the house.
As they came along the road, the sun set.
Garhbangal had a separate house to sleep in;
They reached the house in the dark and lit a lamp;
There was a cot there and they sat upon it.
They were young, they slept together.
As they lay and sat, they did as they desired.

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THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: YOUTH

The mother was looking out to see why her son did not return,
She went to ask the folk in the bazaar;
The bazaar-folk said that he had been talking to a girl.
She came home and told her husband saying, 'He has been talking to a girl'.
'I had already told him, that's why I sent him there,'
The Usendi told his wife and she was content.
There was a separate sleeping-place for the Garhbangal boy;
She went there and saw them talking to one another.
Seeing this, she returned and told her husband.
The wife of Nirabosi Usendi said,
'There are two there and they are talking to each other'.
Then they both went there to look.
As he went, the Usendi called, 'Have you come back, O boy?'
When they knew someone was coming, they sat separately.
'O daughter-in-law, you also have come home.'

They took them both into the house.
The old woman lit a lamp to put the tika;
She put tika on the girl and kissed her.
Nirabosi Usendi, holding his stick, went to call the villagers,
'Come brothers, my son has brought a girl;
Let us discuss her, whether she will remain or no.'
So saying the old man brought them all.
'She has come as a *haiwark* girl;
Let us marry her at once.'
All night the marriage ceremony continued until dawn.
The boys gathered holding their drums,
And the girls with their cymbals in their hands.
At dawn they finished the marriage and performed the Lagir,
And the boys danced the Lagir dance.

The old man Kamragatti heard the noise of the dance.
He said to himself, 'Where is my daughter? I must have a marriage for her like that'.
They finished the marriage and finished the tika also.
All day they ate and drank till evening, and the boys were thinking,
'Let us take the bride and bridegroom and put them in their house',
They took the bride and bridegroom and shut the door;
They took a bottle of liquor and stole a cock;
Boys and girls ate it together.

Old man Kamragatti said, 'Who has carried off my daughter?'
He was grinding his teeth as though his mouth was full of pulse.
When he learnt that Nirabosi Usendi had taken his daughter,
He sent an arrow saying, 'Let Nirabosi Usendi die'.
He sent an arrow of fire and snapped his fingers.

Nirabosi Usendi and his wife died;
Garhbangal, the boy, was weeping *sirk, sirk*.
The whole village gathered there;
The boy went for the samdhi and they all came;
The brother-clans and samdhi-clans gathered.
The samdhi laughing beat the drum;
They buried them both and made a tomb.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

584 All the clansmen went away.
539 The Garhbangal boy told them,
'Come on Wednesday, and on that day we will do the *gatgang* ceremony.
On that day we will put a stone or pole'.
So they did Johar and went away.

The cock-people gave cocks and the goat-people gave goats;
And the clansmen made ready goat and pig.
On that day all the samdhi came.
The dead man's soul was living in a saja leaf,
The samdhi cooked the food to give to the dead man.
After cooking it they carried some of the food to the cross-roads,
They called the soul to eat it;
They offered the *jāwa* and *gāto* in the name of the dead man;
The boys and girls danced with the dhol drums.
They cut a saja tree as a post and placed it in the ground.
The soul came there and that is the house of the dead.

The samdhi went to bring a stone;
They went to the Hill of Panthers for a stone;
Some took a cot and some took poles to carry it.
The samdhi brought the stone;
They brought it to the place where they had put the pillar,
The samdhi saw the place and said, 'This is a good spot'.
So thinking they dug a hole;
They dug two holes with the digging-stick;
There they put the stone of the dead.
From the saja tree the dead man came to the stone;
They put haldi and oil on the stone; they put tika on it.

Those who had cowries gave cowries; those who had money gave money;
Those who had rupees gave rupees; those who had dishes gave dishes;
Those who had pots gave pots; those who had cloth gave cloth.
All these things the samdhi took away.
There they finished the work of the stone of death.
'Go, samdhi, go, let us eat in the house.'
Then came from the dead man's house
All old men and women and chelik and motiari also,
They gave their wages to the chelik of several villages.
The boys went away and they fed the samdhi with beef and rice.
For putting a stone for a dead man, this much only.
The dead man's bazaar is not a small bazaar;
On a Saturday, on that day was the bazaar.
There was a king of the dead, he was a great man;
That Raja made ready to go to the bazaar;
His Rani also was ready to go to the bazaar.

Ghotul Pata: The Marriage of Phulsundar Raja

There were seven wealthy brothers,
They had aged parents.
Six of the brothers went to plough,
The youngest stayed at home doing nothing.
He said to his brothers, 'Go and find wives'.
How shall we go without knowing where to go?'

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: YOUTH

'Take a bottle of liquor and go for the betrothal anywhere.' 584
They reached a girl's house. 539
They gave Johar to the father-in-law,
They gave Johar also to the mother-in-law.
Father-in-law asked, 'Why have you come?'
'There is a flower; for that we have brought liquor.'
'We have a flower, but we have already drunk liquor for another.
Take away your liquor, for we will not drink it.'

For their betrothal they had to go elsewhere.
They saw a girl, they gave Johar to her father.
They gave Johar to her mother.
'Where are you going with that bottle of liquor?'
'We have come for the betrothal of your daughter.'
'I have no daughter; take away your liquor.'

As they searched for girls on their way they reached a house.
They came to a widow's house.
There was a girl there.
'Why have you come with a bottle of liquor?'
'You have a daughter; we have come for her.'
'She is my only child; I will not give her to you.
She is to me both daughter and son.'

Leaving that house, the boys went on their way.
They said, 'How are we to find girls for wives?'
There were daughters of Bhagavan;
There were seven sisters and none were betrothed.
The boys went to Bhagavan and gave him Johar.
Bhagavan asked them, 'Why have you come?'
'You have a daughter; we have come for her betrothal.'
'It is true I have a daughter, but we have already drunk liquor for her.'
So said Bhagavan and the boys made ready to depart.

But as they were going, the youngest daughter said,
'O sisters, hear my word.
A year has passed, but my father has not drunk liquor for me.'
The small girl said to her father,
'We are all mature; why don't you accept the liquor?'
Her father said, 'There is no one who has come for your betrothal; how then can I give you?'
The small girl went to the house where the young men were,
And said, 'Come to my house for my betrothal'.

Father-in-law said, 'There is no mate; why have you come?'
Bhagavan said, 'There is no mate, O daughters'.
The small girl told her sisters, 'There is no mate for us.
What shall we do. There is the Baidar.
Let us ask him about our mates.
Birds and ants combine in pairs, and why not we?
Let us go to the Baidar, for he keeps the accounts of all'.

They then asked the Baidar, 'Are there mates for us or no?'
Bringing his books the Baidar came out.
He brought a book large as a village boundary.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

He read his book about birth and mating,
He sat and looked at his books.
Then said he, 'It is written here.
Reading my books I forgot.
Morning and evening I have read my books
For twelve years and thirteen ages,
All read but none can understand.
Sitting, sitting, I have become hunchbacked'.

At that time the small girl saw the book and laughed.
She tied up that book in her waist-cloth,
She told her sisters, 'Let us go.
Let the papers be; but let us go to the house'.
The small girl took Baidar's papers in her cloth.
Her elder sisters asked her, 'What are you taking in your cloth?
O sister, let us know what it is'.

They gathered round and read the paper.
'It is for our mating and says what should be done.
We cannot win mates unless we go to the Middle World.'
Down to the Middle World they climbed by a silken thread and went towards the east.
They came to a village. 'Where are you, brothers? See, we have come.'
'I am the watcher of my house, I always live at home.'
'O brother, hear my word.'
'What is it? Let me know.'
'Keep us with you, so we will remain.'
'I do not know what to answer; my elder brothers know.
Wait a little till they return home.'

Soon the brothers came and the girls said, 'Brothers, brothers!'
'What is the matter? Let us know.'
'No, it is nothing. Only keep us with you, brothers.'
'All of you may live here if you like.'
The small girl said, 'Let us be divided pair by pair.
The eldest sister for the eldest brother,
The middle sisters for the middle brothers.
And I will live with the youngest brother'.

All then were paired with each other.
They gave a granary-full of rice to be husked;
Soni and Dami husked the rice.
The villagers were called to fetch the liquor.
Twelve outstills of *phuli* and thirteen outstills of *rasi*.
They went to a Chitkul Mitkul Kalarin, beautiful and sweet.
They asked for liquor from that Kalarin,
Twelve outstills of *phuli* and thirteen outstills of *rasi*.
The Chitkul Mitkul Kalarin measured out the liquor.
The liquor was brought and the marriage was performed.
The marriage was finished and they were yoked together.

Living, living, the eldest brother's wife conceived.
Day by day the belly grew; it was made by Bhagavan.
She gave birth to a boy and the Chhati ceremony was performed.
For that ceremony they husked a granary-full of rice.
'Go and bring leaves and fuel for the Chhati ceremony.'

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: YOUTH

587 Five went to the hill for leaves and fuel.
539 The small girl was lazy, she was sleeping on the road.
'O girl, pick the leaves and take them home.'
At that she went away and slept on the rock.
'I am not feeling well, sister, I feel very bad.'
'Why are you feeling ill? What disease have you got?'
'Come here, girl, and lie down and listen:
Whether it be true or false, there is the beating of a drum.'
'No, let us go home, it is for our father's funeral.'
So they went home and told the eldest sister,
'You remain here, we will go for our father's funeral'.
'I too will come with you, O sisters.'
'No, do not come, see how small [1] is your baby.'
'No, I must come, or they'll say, Look the eldest daughter hasn't come.'
She took the baby and went along with them.
'Let us not take the child, let us leave him with the cattle.'
So thinking, they left him with the cattle.

They went on to the funeral.
The baby got up and followed them.
They turned round and said, 'O girl, your baby is coming'.
So they took him with them.
They reached the house and did Johar to everyone.
All wept and they finished the rites of the dead.

The daughter of Gharabundi was Phulsundri Rani.
'O mother, betroth this girl for me.'
'No, son, her betrothal has already been arranged.
They have betrothed her to Oriyal Jhoriyal.'
So he went to his little mother and asked her to arrange his engagement with this girl.
She winked at the boy to come to her.
'Put on some bangles and wear a cloth.'
She has married Raja Phulsundor.
The marriage is done, the liquor is drunk.
They did a Raja-subject marriage [2] hastily.
The Raja caught the Rani's finger and made her sleep inside the house.
He stayed seven days in that village.
The village potter brought his pot to boil the clothes.
In that pot they boiled the clothes and took them to the river.
They threw away the haldi-stained clothes.
But they washed the new clothes and took them out and went.
After bathing they returned to the house.

Both went riding on a horse.
So Phulsundor Raja brought her home.
Reaching home they lived and ate.
Gharabundi went to Oriyal Jhoriyal.
'Phulsundor Raja stole my daughter.'
They searched for them and held a panch.
The panch decided and took the bride-price.

[1] *Yetna*, the word means to hold a little baby with the arm against the breast. The whole line runs in the original—'Mīya wāyma bal bābu to yetna āyore gil gila ātor'.
[2] A Raja-praja marriage is one performed hurriedly, within the limits of a single night and day.

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given by Westermarck and Havelock Ellis and our own statistics. It simply does not work.

Another curious problem is this—why should engaged couples elope together? It is not uncommon—again I have no statistics, but I know of a dozen cases—where chelik and motiari, who were in any case going to be married, have gone to all the trouble and danger of an elopement. Why is this? It is generally due to economic causes. When the parents keep on postponing a marriage on financial grounds, sometimes the boy and girl get tired of waiting and force their parents' hands. This may be done either by the boy making his future wife pregnant, or by simply eloping to some friendly ghotul and persuading the members there to celebrate the marriage. When this is done, nobody really minds very much; for a lot of money is saved, and the married pair are received, when they return, with the usual honours. Such adventures do not seem to ruin the later happiness of the home.

Crawley has explained a similar policy of segregation during the period from engagement to marriage among other peoples as a magical taboo.[1] 'The principle is to prevent all intercourse until the particular ceremonies which obviate the danger of the new relation, mutual contagion between two particular persons, have been performed, and to prepare them for these and for the new state of life—the taboo of avoidance being thought to be in itself some guarantee of future safety.... The young people are about to enter upon a critical state, that of living in more or less close contact with each other, and as that state derives its dangers from their reciprocal influence, a taboo is set between them until it is removed by the ceremony which united them while rendering them mutually innocuous.'

It may be so. But I have a growing conviction that many of our conclusions about the sex life of primitive peoples have been vitiated by the earlier investigators' assumption that aboriginals knew nothing of sexual technique, had no idea of romantic love, and based their actions, even the most intimate, on magical principles and fears. Modern research is rapidly destroying these premises and, certainly for the Muria, I believe that much which convention would ascribe to magic and religion should really be attributed to the tribe's remarkable knowledge of the psychology of sex.

The taboo between betrothed couples is thus seen to be entirely practical. It aims at preserving the mutual stimuli of vision and touch.[2] It is connected with the universal admiration for modesty, the general appeal of reticence. Even if a chelik's wife is not a virgin absolutely, she should at least be a virgin for him. Where this condition is fulfilled marriages are most happy, and the divorce rate is at its lowest.

III. 'A Marriage has been Arranged'

It is only by a breach of all rule and tradition that a chelik's motiari can be his wife. We have seen this happen in 77 cases out of 2000 with a comparatively high percentage of marital failures. In some other cases a chelik is forced by an unlucky pregnancy into a marriage with a girl to whom he was not officially betrothed; in a few other cases romantic passion leads to an elopement. But the great majority of marriages are arranged by the parents, or

[1] Crawley, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 25.

[2] Two proverbial sayings illustrate this. '*Durike ke bāja nāi lāgy*, the distant drum is sweet' and '*Durke māya sudhāpan, najdik māya gindpan*, the distant love is charming, the love at hand detestable.'

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rather—since so many alliances are formed according to the relationship laws —by the voice of society and tradition. The figures are as follows—

Number of—	Number	Percentage
Chelik marrying according to parents' wishes	1884	94·20
Cross-cousin marriages	1799	89·95
Divorces among arranged marriages ..	49	2·60
Irregular marriages	116	5·80
Marriages with ghotul partners ..	77	3·85
Marriages forced by pregnancy ..	26	1·30
Marriages by elopement on romantic grounds	13	0·65
Divorces among irregular marriages ..	10	8·62

The cross-cousin marriage is known as the *gudamol* or *gudapal*, the 'tribe-nest' or 'tribe-milk' marriage, and may be compared with the *dudh-lautâna* or 'bringing back the milk' of the Gond of the Central Provinces. Its popularity, to which the above figures abundantly testify, is not the least of the factors that bind the Muria as a tribe so close together. The *gudamol* is, of course, a marriage between a chelik and his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter, or a motiari and her mother's brother's son or father's sister's son. In its *kutiyâri* form, the cross-cousin marriage is extended to cover persons in the same general classificatory relationship as these but less closely related. What this means in practice is that when a family gives a girl to another family in one generation, it gets a girl back in return in the next generation.

The advantage of this is manifest. The bride-price can be much lower. The clan-ancestors are satisfied—it will be remembered that when a girl leaves a clan at her marriage compensation must be put into the Pot of the Departed. Everything remains homely and familiar—there is the same set of *saga-samdhi*, there are no new relationships to be explored. Old-standing alliances are strengthened. Just as after death, steps are taken to ensure the return of the dead to his own family circle, so at marriage there is satisfaction at keeping the children within a certain range of families.

To the chelik and motiari subjected to this arrangement it appears less that their parents have settled their fate than that society itself has done so. The parents themselves must bow to tribal custom. This is, I think, important in view of the very strong hold of tribal custom and social solidarity upon the Muria, even upon the young Muria. Boys or girls may easily rebel against their parents; obscure complexes may well arouse in them dissatisfaction with anything their parents do; but they have a passionate devotion to the tribe. 'We love our laws', they say, 'and obey them far more readily than we obey the Government—for we made them ourselves.'

We should not therefore think of chelik and motiari as forced by some external influence into unions for which they have no desire; rather we may say that as part of society they follow society's laws.

The mother's brother's son, though he must be avoided, becomes a figure of romance, stronger than the most handsome chelik to whom there is ready access. He is often mentioned in the ghotul songs.

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O mother, the clouds look like smoke,
Each roof seems joined to the one next door.
I must go and see it, mother.
Whom will you go with, daughter?
I will go with my uncle's son, mother.
Don't go with him, daughter;
He will pour haldi over you.
Let him pour haldi if he wills, mother.
I can't rest till I go with him.

In those cases where no *gudamol* union is possible or convenient, the parents consider many things before they go to 'pluck the flower' of a betrothal. It may safely be said that the thought uppermost in their minds is the happiness of their child. A father seeking a daughter-in-law considers whether the women of such and such a family are hard workers, free from the taint of witchcraft, unstained by scandal. He does not seem to worry whether a girl is beautiful or no, though he would naturally prefer her to be 'well made and conformable'. When a betrothal party arrives at a house, a girl's parents discuss much the same things. Will the boy be a good worker? Has there been scandal in the family, signs of indifference to the laws of the clan? Is the boy himself steady, will he go through with the matter? The girl is consulted; if she strongly objects, the father sends the visitors away. Once she has agreed, however, he expects her to abide by her choice. In the song on p. 89 there is a hint that several betrothal parties may visit a house before the parents can make up their minds—a delay not always pleasing to the daughter.

We have, therefore, in Muria society two very different traditions existing side by side. Before marriage, in the ghotul, boys and girls are encouraged to live to the full a life of romantic passion. For marriage, everything must be arranged on the lines of strictest commonsense. A boy can live with the girl he is in love with before marriage, but not in marriage. How does this arrangement work?

I am not here attempting to pass a personal judgement in this matter, I am not considering whether it is a good or a bad arrangement. The interesting thing is what the chelik and motiari think of it.

Generally, the boys and girls believe that what their parents, or rather society and the tribe, arrange makes for ultimate happiness. They may object to a particular choice made by their parents, but they do not object to their making a choice at all. It is easier for them to accept this position because what they think matters about marriage is not so much the partner as the whole condition of life so different from life in the ghotul. 'The ghotul is for happiness', they said at Nayanar. 'Marriage is for work.' They are more concerned about the new home than the new partner. The new way of life is more important than the person who will share it.

It is some such reflection as this that enables boys and girls to bear the very great pain of separation from their lovers at marriage. This is a very real thing, especially in the *jodidār* ghotul. Here a chelik and motiari may have lived six or seven years together, perhaps in great fidelity, and have come to love each other devotedly. Everything in life—except responsibility for children and a home—has been shared. They have gone together to festivals and danced all night in each other's arms. They have been to a score of marriages and shared a world of jokes together. They have slept night after night in the ghotul 'lovely as a bison's horns'. Then suddenly

THE GHOTUL AND MARRIAGE

X883 583 An old woman at Masora spoke with great indignation about the way her mother treated the boy who served for her. 'She gave him the heaviest work, and she delayed our marriage as long as she could, for she wanted to get as much work out of him as possible.'

An interesting expression was used at Chandabera. 'A Lamhada is the *koryōri* (daughter-in-law), because he is brought to the house of his wife. Just as the mother-in-law usually abuses her son's wife, so now does the mother-in-law abuse her daughter's husband. He is the daughter-in-law and must do her work.'

X883 583 539 An adaptation of a familiar folk-tale motif describes the trials of a Lamhada and his final victory.

> A father-in-law says to the Lamhada boy, 'Boy, go and sow sarson seed'. The boy goes and in the evening, the father says, 'Boy, go and bring it back, seed for seed, in the same measure'. The Lamhada goes weeping, for he loves the girl, and begins to pick up the seeds one by one. A pair of partridges come by and say, 'Boy, don't weep: we will gather it all for you'. By evening every grain is back in the measure.
>
> Then says the father, 'Boy, bring me five measures of ashes from hemp-waste'. The Lamhada collects a pile of waste and burns it, but the ashes go to nothing. At last he goes to his father-in-law and says, 'Without a knotless bamboo, I can do nothing'. The father searches on every hillside and at last returns. 'Boy, I am defeated'. The Lamhada says, 'But if I bring it, will you give me your daughter at once'? The father promises, and the Lamhada brings back a reed. 'Here is bamboo without a knot: give me your daughter.'

X883 ● 584 What of the relations between the Lamhada and the girl with whom he is brought into such intimate contact? In the ghotul the same rules are supposed to apply as govern the conduct of other betrothed couples. The girl must strictly avoid her Lamhada; she must not salute him, nor comb his hair, nor massage him. She must not sleep with him, or sit on his mat. In his presence she will sleep regularly with other boys; he too will have his own partners. Yet neither may reproach the other, though they will be working together all day in the same house.

But although betrothed couples usually seem to observe these rules of avoidance fairly strictly, they are sometimes broken by the Lamhada. Several factors contribute to this. The boy and girl are brought into far more constant and intimate contact in kitchen, field and forest than ordinary engaged couples. A girl cannot help feeling that the Lamhada boy is already more or less married to her when she sees his relations with her parents, watches him already observing the special rules of jesting and avoidance with her other relatives; perhaps not a little sympathy is roused in her heart at the sight of the hard life he leads. Above all, if they do come together, and if she should become pregnant, nothing is easier than to perform their marriage—the boy concluding his term of service afterwards. When the Malik of Lohatur who was a Lamhada made his betrothed pregnant, they were not even fined, for the parents said, 'If it hadn't happened today, it would have happened tomorrow'.

Many cases of such 'irregularities' have been recorded. Dhani, the old Muria woman of Masora, had her affections strongly stirred by her mother's treatment of her Lamhada and she used to sleep with him in the ghotul. At Tarbaili, a girl was passionately devoted to her Lamhada; they used to slip out together at night into the forest—for at least they must preserve the conventions.

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A former Kotwar of the Berma ghotul was Lamhada to the Dulosa; he made her pregnant, but as they were engaged, they were quickly married, though not without a fine of one rupee to the ghotul and three to the village. I also heard at Chargaon of a Lamhada who slept in the ghotul with his bride-to-be. In Lihagaon, a motiari went from the girls' ghotul to the boys' ghotul (for here they have separate establishments) and slept with her Lamhada; she was caught and they were punished.

In Palli (Kondagaon), I was told of two Lamhada; one was the Pahardar who was serving for the Dulosa, the other was the Chajen who was serving for the Tiloka. One day, they said with a good deal of amusement, the Tiloka said 'Johar' by mistake to her own Lamhada. Sometimes too she slept with him, but usually these two pairs divided—Pahardar and Tiloka and Chajen and Dulosa—and slept together in one corner. 'There could be no quarrel or jealousy; they are motiari, no one has a *haq* over them.'

A Kinnaring Pata glances at such relations.

> How old is the Kinnaring girl?
> She goes to bed in our house,
> But she gets up with her Lamhada.
> She eats and drinks in our house,
> But she sleeps and rises with her Lamhada.

An interesting comment on these irregularities, and one which suggests that the rules governing the conduct of engaged couples were not made without reason, comes from Rengagondi. A former Munshi of the ghotul served as Lamhada for a girl, and often had intimate relations with her. She too petted him in the house and saw that he got good food and not too much work. But once they were married and went away to live together, she began to repulse him; she generally refused intercourse, and when he forced her, ran home to her parents.

To the Muria mind, however, the most important disorders of this arrangement are financial. Suppose the Lamhada turns out unsuitable: he does not work, he is a fool, he becomes diseased. He will have to be compensated for his wasted years. Suppose the girl elopes with someone else; the Lamhada has his just claims.

As far as I can tell, the Muria—in distinction to the Gond and Baiga of the Central Provinces—deal very fairly with these boys. If a man's daughter elopes before marriage, they see that her husband pays full compensation, anything up to fifty rupees, to the Lamhada. If the boy has to be turned out he is paid something, not perhaps very much, for such services as he has rendered. There was a significant incident at Pharasgaon.

> 'I served as a Lamhada for seven years', said Baiti, a Muria of about forty. 'Just as we were going to be married, my girl ran away with a chelik she had met during the Diwali dances. My father-in-law was a very good man, and he gave me his youngest daughter instead. She was much younger than I was, but I took her to my own home and we both went to live in the ghotul. Although we were to be married, she used to sleep with other boys and I with other girls. We never quarrelled about it. Now we have been married for years and always have been happy. I never went to her before marriage. Now she looks older than I do, but when we were married people laughed at me for taking such a young girl.'

This incident, which is the converse to what happened at Rengagondi, certainly suggests that it is best to keep the betrothal rules.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE GHOTUL AND MARRIAGE

Another form of compensation was recorded at Modenar. Here there were two Lamhada in the ghotul serving for two sisters; the Diwan was betrothed to the Dulosa, the Likhen to the Jaimo. One day the Jaimo was found to be pregnant by the Diwan; they went off together and were married, and the Dulosa was given to the Likhen in compensation.

The institution is not very common; it would be wrong, however, to call it unpopular. Out of our 2,000 cases, 113 were serving-marriages. Of these 93 were cross-cousin marriages, 40 *gudamol* and 53 *kutiyāri*. 13 had divorced their wives or been deserted by them, a rather high proportion of 11·5 per cent as compared with the divorce-rate of the whole tribe which is under 3 per cent. But the other 100 marriages were stated to have been happy enough. The majority of Muria, however, can generally find sufficient money to pay the small bride-price required—and after all, a son in your house is worth something—and the Muria love their children. Hence only 5·5 per cent of marriages are of this type.

V. POLYGYNY

A gentleman, talking to Samuel Johnson about France, told him that in that country as soon as a man of fashion married, he took an opera girl as his mistress, declaring this to be the general custom. 'Pray sir,' said Johnson, 'How many opera girls may there be?' The gentleman answered, 'About four score'. 'Well then, sir,' replied Johnson, 'you see there can be no more than four score men of fashion who can do this.' Even if apocryphal, this rejoinder is relevant to any discussion of the prevalence of polygyny among primitive peoples. For this type of marriage is a simple matter of statistics.

Westermarck laboriously considers the geographical distribution of polygyny and then turns his attention to its prevalence in different grades of economic culture. Quite apart from the astonishing character of some of the witnesses whom he admits to his scientific court—for the aboriginals of central India he depends on Forsyth and Hislop (admirable in many respects, but how could they possibly have known the facts about Gond polygyny?), an article in the *Calcutta Review*, and the childish *Wild Tribes of India* by Rowney[1]—his entire argument is vitiated by one simple fact. In every primitive society, every woman must be married. There are no aboriginal spinsters. Widows may, and generally must, remarry. Widowers may remarry and usually do. There are no aboriginal concubines or prostitutes (outside certain professional tribes). Therefore the prevalence or otherwise of polygyny is conditioned largely by this one fact, the excess of the number of females over males. Thus Westermarck's statement that 'among pastoral peoples I have found none which can be regarded as strictly monogamous, and both among them and the higher agriculturalists polygyny is undoubtedly more frequent than among the hunters and incipient agriculturalists',[2] means nothing more, if it means anything at all, than that among hunters and incipient agriculturalists, there is a higher female mortality and no surplus women—which is what we would expect in view of the hard life lived at this stage of economic development.

In any society where there are more women than men, and where there are neither spinsters nor prostitutes, there must be some form of polygyny. This is so in Europe and in so-called 'higher' society everywhere, only there the plural wives are called mistresses and have no legal or other rights. The Muria is more honest and more just; he turns his mistress into a wife and accepts her children as his own.

[1] Westermarck, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 8. [2] Ibid, p. 26.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

girl's first menstruation is marked by special rites of purification. There is little conscious education of the young who grow up in natural freedom and learn by imitation. Marriage is generally adult, but is arranged by the parents and the cross-cousin marriage is common. Betrothal ceremonies are simple. The boy's father goes with gifts and a traditional formula is used—'We have heard there is a flower growing in your garden. We have come to pluck it and put it in our hair'. If a boy's family cannot afford the bride-price required, they may send him to serve as a Lamhada in the house of his future wife. His period of service is for three or five years, and the marriage is often celebrated before it is complete. Marriage by capture, which was probably the traditional method, has not yet died out, and occasionally there is a case of the reverse tradition when a girl comes as a Paitu and forces herself upon a man who is bound to marry her. Widow-remarriage is permitted and indeed enjoined, the husband's younger brother having the first claim on the person and property of the widow. Divorce is rare but is available to either husband or wife. The wife usually achieves it by eloping with another man and the husband in most cases accepts a *fait accompli*.

The actual marriage ceremony is also simple. There is no annointing with turmeric or oil, no perambulation of the sacred pole. Customs vary from place to place, but the traditional marriage has probably only three elements—a celebration which includes feasting, drinking and dancing, the pouring of water from the roof of a house or shed onto the bridal pair and the ceremonial consummmation of the marriage at which bride and bridegroom are forcibly shut up in a room together.

VI

Funeral ceremonies are more elaborate, and since this book is concerned with death, we will consider them in greater detail.

Maria thinking about the destiny and state of the soul after death is as confused as that of more sophisticated people. At least three contradictory views of the subject are held at the same time. I think that the oldest and characteristically